



Emergency Management Division Informational Letter

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TO: Local and District Emergency Management Coordinators
SUBJECT: National Incident Management System (NIMS)

A. Overview

On March 1, 2004, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) introduced the National Incident Management System (NIMS) to provide a comprehensive national approach to incident management, applicable at all jurisdictional levels and across functional disciplines. Lessons learned from previous large-scale disasters point to a need for a National Incident Management System. Emergencies occur every day somewhere in the United States. These emergencies are large and small and range from fires to hazardous materials incidents to natural and technological disasters. Each incident requires a response.

Whether from different departments within the same jurisdiction, from mutual aid partners, or from state and federal agencies, responders need to be able to work together, communicate with each other and depend on each other. Until now, there have been no standards for domestic incident response that reach across all levels of government and all response agencies. The events of September 11 have underscored the need for and importance of national standards for incident operations, incident communications, personnel qualifications, resource management, and information management and supporting technology.

To provide standards for domestic incident response, President Bush signed Homeland Security Presidential Directive (HSPD)-5. HSPD-5 authorized the Secretary of Homeland Security to develop the National Incident Management System, or NIMS. NIMS provides for interoperability and compatibility among all responders. HSPD-5 also required DHS to establish a mechanism for ongoing coordination to provide strategic direction for, and oversight of, the NIMS. To this end, the NIMS Integration Center (NIC) was established to support both routine maintenance and the continuous refinement of the NIMS.

This system encompasses much more than the Incident Command System (ICS), although ICS is a critical component of the NIMS. It also provides a common foundation for training and other preparedness efforts, communicating and sharing information with other responders and with the public, ordering resources to assist with a response effort, and for integrating new technologies and standards to support incident management. For the first time, all of the nation's emergency responders will use a common language, and a common set of procedures when working individually and together to keep America safe. The NIMS ensures that emergency responders will have the same preparation, the same goals and expectations, and most importantly, they will be speaking the same language.

Implementation of and compliance with the NIMS is critical to ensuring full and robust preparedness across our nation. HSPD-5 established ambitious deadlines for NIMS adoption. FY 2005 is a start up year for NIMS implementation and full compliance with the NIMS is not required in FY 2005.

B. NIMS Compliance

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) did not officially stand up the National Incident Management System Integration Center (NIC) until June 3, 2004. The NIC is tasked with providing mechanisms for implementing the NIMS across federal, state and local organizations. The NIC is beginning work on how to implement the responsibilities assigned to it under NIMS, including the development of first responder training and certification standards, oversight of a national credentialing system, overseeing research and development efforts in incident management technologies and techniques, and developing mechanisms for ensuring compliance with NIMS.

NIMS compliance requirements will be phased in over time. FY 2005 will be a NIMS ramp-up year; full NIMS compliance will not be required until the end of FY 2006. However, given the urgency of moving forward, NIC is encouraging everyone involved with emergency response and preparedness to begin to familiarize themselves with NIMS concepts and principles and initiate activities that will lead to system implementation as soon as possible. For example, those agencies that are not already using the ICS should begin taking steps to institutionalize the use of ICS across their entire response systems.

In Michigan, local jurisdictions must move forward, to the maximum extent possible, with integration of the National Incident Management System through the implementation of several initiatives during FY 2005. The Emergency Management Division will be providing additional tools in the near future to assist jurisdictions in recordkeeping and verifying their NIMS compliancy.

The following points do not represent all of the actions necessary to implement fully the NIMS; they do define all FY 2005 NIMS compliance requirements:

1. NIMS/NRP Training

- a. **Completing the NIMS Awareness Course, "National Incident Management System (NIMS), An Introduction" IS-700** - This independent study course developed by the Emergency Management Institute (EMI) explains the purpose, principles, key components and benefits of NIMS. The course is available on the EMI web page at: <http://training.fema.gov/EMIWeb/IS/is700.asp>. The course requires 45 minutes to three hours to complete. IS-700 is not an Incident Command System course.
- b. **Completing the NRP Awareness Course, "National Response Plan (NRP), An Introduction" IS-800** - The purpose of the course is to introduce the NRP, describe the purpose of the NRP, describe the roles and responsibilities of entities as specified in the NRP, identify the organizational structure used for NRP coordination, describe the field-level organizations and teams activated under the NRP, and identify the incident management activities addressed by the NRP. The course is available on the EMI web page at: <http://www.training.fema.gov/emiweb/IS/is800.asp>. The course requires 45 minutes to three hours to complete.
- c. At a minimum, those persons responsible for the implementation and supervision of emergency response within the emergency services disciplines and government administration (state and local EOC command staff and their alternates) must complete this training during FY 2005. Records of IS-700 and IS-800 training for emergency response personnel must be maintained and copies made available, upon request, to the Emergency Management Division.

2. Adopting NIMS

Local governments should establish legislation, executive orders, resolutions, or ordinances to adopt formally the National Incident Management System. The adoption of NIMS should be recorded in an official document and a copy provided to the Emergency Management Division. A sample local resolution is attached and an electronic copy in MSWord available from the Emergency Management Division. The wording can also be incorporated into the jurisdictions general emergency management resolution.

3. NIMS Baseline

- a. **Establish a NIMS baseline by determining which NIMS requirements you already meet** - The Emergency Management Division recognizes that local governments have already implemented many of the concepts and protocols identified in the National Incident Management System. The NIMS Integration Center (NIC) has developed the National Incident Management System Capability Assessment Support Tool (NIMCAST), a web-based self-assessment system. The NIMCAST allows users to assess the current status/level of their respective jurisdiction's incident preparedness against the requirements outlined in the NIMS. It provides the baseline for a jurisdiction to use in developing its full NIMS implementation plan.



- b. Using the NIMCAST as a method of identifying weaknesses in incident preparedness will assist in becoming compliant with NIMS by FY 2006. Emergency management program coordinators are to complete the NIMCAST for their jurisdiction by September 30, 2005, and provide notification to EMD that it has been completed. The tool can be found at: <http://www.fema.gov/nimcast/index.jsp>.

C. Summary of FY 2005 NIMS Requirements

1. Pass local resolution formally recognizing the NIMS and adopting the NIMS principles and policies.
2. State and local command staff (EOC representatives and alternates) complete the on-line NIMS Awareness Course: "National Incident Management System (NIMS), An Introduction" IS-700.
3. State and local command staff (EOC representatives and alternates) complete the on-line NRP Awareness Course "National Response Plan (NRP), An Introduction" IS-800.
4. Emergency management program to complete the NIMCAST for the jurisdiction.

D. Identification and Modification of Existing Plans, Procedures, and Policies

Emergency response plans, including those that fulfill Emergency Support Functions (ESF) under the NRP and internal response plans, such as Emergency Operations Plans (EOP) and Continuity of Operations Plans (COOP), must be modified to adopt NIMS principles and language. While plans do not need to be completed during FY 2005, plans and procedures should be identified and revisions made during the course of any scheduled updates during FY 2005.

E. FY 2006 and FY 2007 Requirements

In order to receive FY 2006 preparedness funding, the minimum FY 2005 compliance requirements described above must be met. Applicants will be required to certify as part of their FY 2006 grant applications that they have met the FY 2005 NIMS requirements. Additional information about NIMS compliance and resources for achieving compliance will be forthcoming from the NIC.

F. Conclusion

Adoption of NIMS will progress in stages. Each stage will be referenced against standards; training criteria associated with the functions or tasks; the availability of training programs and technical assistance, and the provision of evaluation methods that jurisdictions may use to review and assess their programs against NIMS requirements. Implementing the NIMS is a dynamic process and maintenance will be required on an ongoing basis, not a single action program.

G. Resources

NIMS Integration Center. The NIC posts up-to-date information on the progress and current activities on the NIC web page. The NIC web page can be found at <http://www.fema.gov/nims>.

If you have any questions regarding NIMS, please contact Jim Reardon at (517) 333-5017 or Mark Wesley at (517) 333-5023.

Sincerely,



JOHN ORT, CAPTAIN

Deputy State Director of Homeland Security
and Emergency Management

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Attachment (1)

- Sample Local Government Resolution for the Adoption of the National Incident Management System

